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ABSTRACT

This report examines the nature and practice of effective leadership in schools in England and Wales in the 1990s. It is based on a study that explored how existing theories of effective leadership--purposeful leadership, transformational leadership, or moral leadership--compared to the practices of successful head teachers in times of change. The research was based on more than 200 interviews with heads (principals), staff, governors, parents, and students in 12 primary, secondary, and special schools. The methodology recognized that effective leadership was a highly contextualized and relational construct. A generic case-study protocol was designed in which each school was visited for two-and-a-half days. Analysis revealed that the various stakeholders shared a broadly similar social construction of leadership that did not wholly endorse existing theories of leadership. The heads themselves operated on the basis of both internally and externally determined measures of quality control; their quality-assurance criteria had a broader agenda in keeping with a holistic moral vision of a good school and good teachers. Their leadership approaches did not neatly adhere to existing leadership theories, in part because the complexity of the role they faced meant that no one theory could explain existing practices. (Contains 30 references.) (RJM)

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Challenging the Orthodoxy of Effective School Leadership[1]

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Introduction

There is a voluminous literature on leadership, effective schools and school improvement which offers a bewildering array of theories, models and strategies for aspiring and serving headteachers. Yet most are derived from business, from studies in other cultures or from times and circumstances, which we believe, do not match those of headteachers working in schools in the UK in the late 1990s. During this decade radical externally imposed change has fundamentally affected the roles, relationships and accountabilities of primary and secondary heads (principals) in all countries. It is unnecessary to rehearse the details of these, except perhaps to acknowledge that there have been both positive and negative consequences for schools and their leaders.

This decade has also been a time during which a great deal of effort has been put into documenting the positive and negative influences of leaders upon school cultures and performance. Various theoretical models have been espoused concerning the impact of leaders (Southworth, 1995, Grace, 1996, Barth, 1990, Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990, Fullan, 1992) but the search continues for an adequate account of effective leadership in post-modern times. Recent leadership studies have focused upon values – the 'moral purposes' and moral craft of leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992); the roles of leaders in creating a 'community of learners' (Barth, 1990, Senge, 1990); and the capacities of leaders to 'make a difference' through their ability to 'transform' (Sergiovanni, 1995) or 'liberate' (Tampoe, 1998). However, little empirical data exists which demonstrates the

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extent to which such values, roles and capacities are being applied by effective leaders in effective schools. Furthermore, there are few studies that have attempted to collect and compare the perspectives of those who, in addition to headteachers themselves, arguably possess the most working knowledge of leadership, i.e. teachers, parents, governors and students.

The Research

In a climate which is increasingly critical of schools, the NAHT (National Association of Headteachers) in the UK commissioned research to identify, examine and celebrate good leadership practice. This project became a means of identifying from those 'closest to the action' the nature and practice of effective leadership in schools in England and Wales in the 1990s. The Project Team set out to examine how existing theories of effective leadership, the 'purposeful leadership', 'transformational' or 'moral' leadership, matched up to the practice of successful headteachers in times of change.

The research reported here, through more than two hundred interviews with heads, staff, governors, parents and students in twelve primary, secondary and special schools reveals the complexities of effective headship. When it began there were few such empirical studies of its kind in this, or any other country, which took a 360° perspective on headship by interviewing all the stakeholders who came into direct contact with their leadership.

Methodology

The methodology recognised that 'effective' leadership was both a highly contextualised and relational construct. Therefore not only did it need to be investigated by reference to multiple perspectives within a school, but schools needed to be selected on the basis of providing a wide range of contexts and leadership challenges. The matrix for the selection of the case study schools was therefore constructed around four dimensions which would allow for a series of 12 theory developing case studies (Yin, 1989) to be selected on the basis of their representing 'extreme cases' (Walker, 1989).

The dimensions were:

- Schools which were working within different phases (primary to secondary, and including special schools)

- Schools based within a range of communities (urban/suburban/rural, different socio-economic groupings, regional spread)

- Schools in which publicly acknowledged 'effective' leaders had spent different amounts of time.

- Headteachers who had been identified by independent external inspection reports and by their peers.

A generic case study protocol was designed collaboratively in which each school was visited for two and half days during which interviews were conducted with a range of participants. These were selected by the headteacher using the criteria provided by the team (in the case of small schools all teachers were interviewed) in an initial telephone call and follow-up letter. Two hundred individual and group interviews were conducted across the 12 schools:

Principals	36	(each was interviewed three times)
Teachers	92	
Parents	24	(these were interviewed in focus groups, so the views of a total of more than 100 parents views were elicited)
Governors	24	
Students	24	(these were interviewed in focus groups so that a total of more than 100 students views were elicited)

[1] See Day et al (1999) Effective Headteachers: A report commissioned by the NAHT for a full account

Each research team member was responsible for carrying out the interviews in at least one school, all of which were taped. The team met at intervals between the school visits in order to share emerging analytical themes and to review the protocol.

Overall, the cross case analysis of the case studies was based around two meta-analytical themes:

i) The contradictions, overlaps and tensions between the different constructions of leadership by headteachers, deputy headteachers, teachers, ancillary staff, governors, parents and pupils. The themes under which these various perspectives were explored were drawn out by a process of collaborative thematic induction (Miles and Huberman, 1994) by the team during their regular meetings, and by reference to the existing literature on leadership.

ii) The identification of leadership values, tensions and dilemmas as reported by the headteachers. These dilemmas and tensions provided the team with the opportunity to portray the holistic impact of leadership on the headteachers.

The case records were subjected to a five-phase content analysis: a) in relation to the case study protocol; b) in relation to the emergent themes and dilemmas within individual cases; c) as a result of sharing analytical drafts of themes and dilemmas which led to the clarification and amalgamation of themes; d) as a result of combining the data presented from each phase with each member of the team took a lead in analysing each of the stakeholder perspectives, the tensions, and the dilemmas.; and e) a final thematic interpretation which was agreed and related to the literature.

An analytical overview

The analysis revealed that the various stakeholders shared a broadly similar social construction of 'leadership' running across all the stakeholders. The fact that such shared constructions existed across such wider groups and disparate contexts is perhaps unsurprising when one considers the emphasis placed in the media, literature, folklore, as

well as in the profession itself, on what constitutes a 'good' leader. This meant that when we came to interview, the various stakeholders tended to agree on the need for 'bravery', 'openness', 'honesty', 'good decision making', 'people skills' and 'vision'. However, in relation to existing leadership theories there were a number of common characteristics that emerged which were somewhat different from those identified in previous studies of effective leadership (e.g. Sammons et al 1988). The presence of a broadly shared construction of effective leadership amongst very different stakeholders is significant for three reasons:

First it helped us realise the extent to which what we were gleaning from the various stakeholders were not just characteristics of their headteachers, that they had observed, but were also beliefs about how 'good' leaders should act, these beliefs had their roots within common social constructions of what leadership is about. As social constructions, rather than just observations, they formed a complex matrix of demands and expectations around the headteachers which they partially assimilated, always had to manage and sometimes challenged.

Second the analysis had begun to reveal patterns of expectations amongst stakeholders in that they gave greater significance to certain characteristics because of their position within the school and its broader community. For example, honesty and openness in decision making may be seen as particularly significant by teachers whose careers and working conditions would be directly effected by them. Parents in particular valued their headteacher's ability to communicate and draw them into the community of the school. Governors emphasised the strategic and micro-political skills of head teachers. What the analysis revealed within an overall pattern of agreement was a matrix of needs and expectations within which the stakeholders placed different value on the same characteristic. This variation in the importance attached to certain characteristics also shifted over time, especially between the initial phases of a headteacher tenure and when they had become established. This patterning of expectations we have begun to conceptualise as a matrix through which the effective headteachers were able to navigate.

Third this 360 degree matrix of expectations and demands placed on the headteachers by the broader school community played an important role in how they experienced the leadership tensions and dilemmas they related. It formed the backdrop to these tensions and dilemmas by playing a part in their construction and in providing critical audiences which the headteachers had to manage simultaneously. The relationship between the stakeholders' characterisation of effective leadership and the leadership tensions and dilemmas is illustrated in the following section.

The Characterisation of Effective Leaders

The stakeholder's responses revealed a complex picture of leadership which did not wholly endorse existing theories of leadership, or confirm the main theoretical perspectives. The analysis revealed that the stakeholders viewed the headteachers as exhibiting similar sets of 'leadership characteristics' and managing broadly similar sets of tensions and dilemmas. Although the heads were at different stages in their careers, of different ages, had different experiences and were working in very different contexts there was a core set of characteristics recognised from all angles of our 360-degree perspective. This paper focuses on some of these in order to convey a sense of the relationship between the characterisation of effective headteachers, the tensions that surrounded them and the leadership dilemmas which they faced. The full report reveals a much more complex picture. We've chosen just three of these characteristics: the person in the professional: maximising staff potential: and high expectations. From these arise a number of tensions and dilemmas. We have selected two key dilemmas which we have termed 'Develop or Dismiss', which considers the issue of how to deal with staff who are either failing within a school, and 'Sub-contract or Mediate, which considers the nature of the boundary role of the headteacher in the context of externally initiated change.

The Person in the Professional

Within the study, it became clear that the vision and practices of these heads were underpinned by a number of core **personal values.** These concerned the modelling and

promotion of respect (for individuals), fairness and equality, caring for the well being and whole development of students and staff, integrity and honesty. These core values were often part of strong religious or humanitarian ethics which made it impossible to separate the personal from the professional and which provide empirical support for those who write of the essential moral purposes of those involved in teaching. It was clear from everything said by the heads that their leadership actions on which their values and visions were based were primarily moral (i.e. dedicated to the welfare of staff and students, with the latter at the centre) rather than instrumental (for economic reasons) or non-educative (for custodial reasons).

What is delivered must be good enough for my own children; people are important ... respect their views, opinions, feelings and values ... make sure that every child gets a fair chance ... be true to one's self ... (S1).

I have a core belief in equal opportunities for all and I try to let this determine my leadership style. I believe in fairness and equality for pupils. I try and demonstrate this by treating staff and pupils with courtesy and kindness but ultimately I try and demonstrate that the school is a place where everyone has the same chance to succeed. (S7).

I live by my Christian beliefs and I try to run this school by Christian values. I love the pupils, the teachers and this community. That is what I live out and that is what this school represents for me, a loving community of people. I care deeply about the children and the staff and I try to show this in everything I do (S11).

I give the same messages to all – pupils, parents, staff, governors and the community – that this school is about honesty, trust and integrity (S12).

Ever present in the actions of the headteachers in the study was a strong sense of integrity related to their core values, their sense of caring, their belief in staff as the key to successful improvement efforts and in particular the importance which they attached to building self-esteem and restoring self-confidence. This was very clearly linked to the

issue of staff development and the role the headteacher placed on maximising the staffs' potential.

Maximising Staff Potential

All the heads in the study vigorously promoted all forms of staff development whether through in-service, visits to other schools, peer support schemes. Their two principal concerns were maintaining morale and motivation and capacity building. It was noticeable, also, that such development did not only focus upon needs which were of direct benefit to the school and classroom but also those which were of direct benefit to the individual as a person, and that the development needs of non-teaching staff were also included:

I tell the staff to bring their problems to me with their preferred solutions and their analysis of its ramifications – in this way the staff are educated throughout their day-to-day work ... (S1).

It is now more important than ever to educate the staff – they need both new knowledge and C.P.D. We are working with the Industrial Society on the idea of 'liberation management' which involves the empowerment of staff at all levels and building effective teams ... (S12).

In a sense, the heads' emphases on the continuing development of staff reflected a recognition that the teachers were their most important asset and that, particularly in turbulent times of change, it was important to maintain their own sense of self worth by valuing them.

I aim to achieve cohesiveness among the staff. I hope that the staff have a sense of direction and opportunities to do what they want to do and feel secure and confident in that. I always try to respect the individual ... hopefully, if I am respectful of their views and opinions it will make them feel valued ... (S2).

All were active in intervening to promote capacity and growth.

Teachers need not only support but clear guidance. Most of the things we work through ... we start with interest groups and we work upwards towards the whole school ... (S2).

If people just sit there that's fine. They can't grow unless somebody acts, and I think that is one of the things that has helped me progress, having someone to question me ... (S10).

There were many stories of heads supporting staff in pursuing what might be regarded by some as 'non-school related' agendas. For example, time out of school was given in order to ease a teacher's participation in a sporting event. Another teacher was provided with support for the resolution of a personal problem. In these and other stories the direct benefit to the individuals was, according to the heads, more than repaid at later dates in their added commitment to out of school activities – though there was no explicit 'quid pro quo' agreement that this should be the case.

High Expectations, Setting and Monitoring Standards

The most important aspect of leadership for all the heads concerned working successfully with people. Being a head was not a 'desk job', though it involved organisational skills. It was about displaying the kinds of qualities identified by recent research in England on business leaders i.e. vision, trust, credibility, support for staff, collaboration (Tampoe, 1998) and by research on the 'moral' qualities necessary for good teaching – courage, honesty, fairness. (Sockett 1989).

It's enabling other people ... to take over, to do things ... It's being able to trust other people. To be confident in your own ability ... to delegate tasks and know they will be done ... to allow people to do things and not to try and control it all (S10).

I see leadership as being the front person of the organization, fighting our corner and coming up with certain broad ideas that are then managed ... It's to do with supporting staff and people feeling that I will support them. It's to do with motivating and appreciating staff's efforts ... being interested in what they're doing and giving them feedback on a daily basis ... For them to feel there is somebody who they trust to go out there and give a good account of themselves ... the feeling that I'm not going to do them down ... to patrol the boundaries ... (S11).

Your don't achieve things on your own. You set the way forward, lead by example, communicate what needs to be done and have to be hands on in the way you want it achieved ... we should always guard against getting a bit complacent ... (S5).

By definition good leaders are not only enthusiastic about their jobs and the potential and achievements of the organisation in which they work, they are also believers in their own judgement. They are ruthless in their establishment of high expectations, aware of the need to think strategically so that they can position their school to be one step ahead of emerging changes and, on occasion, willing to take risks to do so – though these will be based upon an intimate knowledge of their own constituency.

In all cases the sense of direction which the heads expressed was related to the determination for all students and teachers to achieve high standards of behaviour and achievement through a combination of high expectations and teamwork. This meant a continuing pressure on self and others for improvement – and this, it seemed, was based, not on standards imposed by government, but upon existing intrinsic values.

The schooling provided (here) has to be good enough for my own children, and if this is the case then it should be fine for other parents. This means that when a child is here there should be no closed doors in their world. They should be excited by the opportunities presented to them, especially having a broad, balanced and well taught curriculum. Directives from the government are likely to restrict what a school can offer, but you must not let this dominate ... (S1).

The high expectations and determination to achieve the highest possible standards almost always meant that these heads were pushing themselves and their staff to the limit. Previous practices were rarely good enough. Indeed, many heads had often inherited situations in which achievement levels of staff and students were unacceptably low. They spoke of these and the progress made:

When the previous head left ... the situation was one of conflict, lack of direction ... the staff were defensive, wary and suspicious of the new head. Eight years later we have a professional and cohesive staff with a sense of direction – it was a matter of liberating their potential. It was good to have what has been achieved validated by OFSTED ... (S1).

All recognised the need to 'push' individuals and that working as a team increased staff's confidence:

The achievement here is that we really push ourselves to the limits to get there ... We know we have further to go in pushing the children and I think we are doing that, and they are not unhappy ... There has to be a balance because children have to have time to have fun ... (S4).

It is in the combination of values, attitudes, skills and qualities where the headteachers' means of achieving the best for staff and students is revealed, rather than any single leadership strategy or personal trait.

You work from the inside and you get parent satisfaction and the quality of the children's work can be seen, and expectations raised ... I am clear where we need to go ... It's essential that you take your colleagues with you ... (S5).

Tensions and Dilemmas

The characterisation of headteachers as providing moral leadership, emphasising the development of their staff and establishing the need for improvement and high standards creates a matrix of expectations. Within this matrix dealing with 'failing' or non-improving staff involves managing a set of tensions and eventually navigating a specific dilemma. The set of tensions they had to manage included the extent to which they were responsible for the development as opposed to the maintenance of their school. Hence, for headteachers who want to develop and transform the practice of others the demands of the system often created tensions:

How do you reconcile the management of paper with the management of people? I spend too much time in my office with bits of paper and precious little time with the people that count (S9).

This tension had been addressed by many heads in the study through a process of delegation and re-prioritisation. Many of the heads had ensured that they allowed time for the development of others in the school by allocating more routine tasks and responsibilities to others:

I have an excellent deputy head who looks after certain aspects of school management for me. This enables me to focus on what really matters, the staff and the pupils (S11).

If I don't develop others, the school won't develop. So that's my priority, other jobs can be delegated but not this one. (S5)

Like other tensions felt by the heads in the study, the tension of transaction versus transformation was not easily resolved. For many heads, 'top-down' demands dictated the way they worked. For example:

I'd like to develop the school but I'm swamped by demands from outside that have to be done yesterday. (S12)

Other heads managed this tension by putting staff needs first as far as they possibly could.

My staff come first at all times but you cannot ignore outside pressures. You need to be selective about the way you respond and not forget the teaching staff and their needs (S 11).

It was recognised that this particular tension was likely to increase as more demands and new policy initiatives are produced. However, the majority of heads in the study remain committed to their staff and their development and as such, to the ongoing transformation of their school.

Principled headteachers may believe that those who work in the school should have space to develop and work with their own educational values. But as managers they are also committed to setting and embedding institutional values. Tension arise because of the way in which different sets of values might be mediated. The issue is whether there is room for different sets of values within one educational organisation.

"He holds traditional human values – care for people and community and giving back to society the benefits of what you have been given at school. You are a better person if you achieve academically, but that is only part of being a whole balanced person. He is politically driven and his personal attitudes are underpinned by his spiritual beliefs" (S4).

"She believes in: accountability for the pupils' achieving their full potential; that schools should provide a caring and supportive environment in which children can be happy at whatever they are doing; having high expectations of the pupils; professional autonomy of teachers coupled with accountability for their actions". (S 11)

Dilemmas

During the analysis of the various stakeholders perspectives it was clear that headteachers, and those around them, recognised that a key part of being a leader was not only being able to deal with tensions but also 'having to make the tough decisions'. In part their leadership was defined by their ability, or willingness, to cope with the 'tough' decision and its consequences. We have just described a matrix in which headteachers moral leadership intermingles with their commitment to staff development and the raising of standards. Within this matrix there are tensions to deal with in terms of managing the need to maintain a school and develop it and also dealing with the different value sets within a school concerning what constitutes appropriate forms of staff development and school improvement. If circumstances conspired to present the headteachers with a situation which was not manageable by 'normal means', which could challenge their authority as leaders, and required one of the 'tough deacons' that defined their leadership then we described this as presenting them with a leadership dilemma. The dilemma which arose out of the particular matrix of expectations and set of tensions we have just described we termed:

Develop or Dismiss?

A dilemma which most of the headteachers we interviewed had had to deal with in their careers – can be summed up in the following question, "What do I do with a member of staff whose poor teaching is badly affecting the education of the pupils and who performance doesn't seem to be improving no matter what I do in terms of support and staff development?'. For people who have to 'make the tough decisions' this particular decision creates a dilemma within their leadership because the continuing failure of an individual member of staff cuts across their moral framework:

"I have a core belief in equal opportunities for all and I try to let this determine my leadership style." (S7)

The headteachers' belief in the potential of all and the possibility of developing everyone within the community of their school lay at the heart of their philosophies of leadership. *"I live by my Christian beliefs and I try to run this school by Christian values. I love the pupils, the teachers, and this community." (S 4). "The well being of the staff and the children is the most important thing" (S4). "When a child is here there should be no closed doors in their world." (S 1)*

If a member of staff, though, began to represent one of those 'closed doors' then the headteacher had the moral imperative to act:

"I think that is one of the things which is perhaps more difficult about management, as opposed to leadership, in teaching. If you are manager or a director of ICI and a member of staff has been giving problems there comes a point where you say "Oh I think this is it I don't think it is in the interest of the organisation that you continue." In teaching it doesn't work like that. I find it really really hard that there is a class of children who nobody is pitching in for. You can support somebody who is incompetent for as long as you like but there comes a point where you know that it is not going to make any difference. Particularly if they have been doing it for a long time." (S2)

The decision, however, still clashed with their ideological and educative commitment to the development of everyone in the school community. The 'failure' of a colleague is perceived as an admission of the failure of one of their key roles i.e. staff development, re-motivating staff, changing the culture of a school all lie at the heart of their leadership.

"He respects people who can do the job that they set out to do ... He's very much a people person.... Not very good with paperwork. He has a lot of contact with staff and with parents... The vision is brilliant and the ideas and the initiatives." (S3)

The potential negative impacts of having to dismiss a member of staff in the relatively small community of a school were widely recognised and added considerably to the tensions surrounding any decision. So dealing with the impact of a dismissal on staff

morale and their sense of security was an important technical aspect of this particular dilemma.

A further associated aspect of the dilemma arises from emphasis that so many of the heads placed on the quality of their relationships with staff. In the previous section the headteachers stressed the need to build supportive, and critical, relationships with staff.

"Leadership is the personal qualities that you bring to the relationships that you are dealing with." (S 2).

"It's important that we are able to support one another personally as well as professionally... If they have an emergency or crisis at home, I'm going to respond to that ...so that they feel valued as a person as well as a teacher." (S3).

"As the years wear by he became more of a friend. He's really concerned with your personal life as well, how it affects you." (S4)

These relationships were a means of developing their leadership and establishing collaborative cultures, as via them they communicated their views, consulted with staff and built up their influence on staff as a whole. The headteachers relationship with their staff were also examples of their leadership in practice, as they demonstrated care, support and knowledge. A great deal of what made them leaders in their communities was the quality of these relationships.

"They're my people that I pastorally look after. There is that sort of rapport... very rarely do I have to throw my weight around." (S3) "It's to do with supporting staff and people feel that I support them. Its to do with motivating and appreciating staff's efforts....being interested in what they're doing and giving them feedback on a daily basis" (S11).

The dismissal of a member of staff by a headteacher, even when supported by other staff, touched upon the nature of the relationship between a leader and their followers. It

demonstrated to staff that their welfare was not the final arbiter in how their relationship with the headteacher would develop:

"If unpleasant things have to be done I don't shrink from it because I realise that I am likely to be improving things for the good of the children." (S5).

The dismissal of a member of staff highlighted a clear boundary for the personal professional relationships which are at the basis of the school community.

Sub-contracting versus Mediation?

"It is difficult to plan too far ahead because 'politics' may dictate further changes. I have changed my leadership style so that everyone knows what they need to know and how to get there. My mind runs ahead of the game.. We need to be proactive not reactive, but we have to carefully manage innovation to minimise the workload of, and impact on, the staff." (S3)

" I enjoy being the leader, the autonomy, the finger in every pie and take pride in moving the school forward and achieving the aims." (S3)

These two quotes from the same headteacher sum up this dilemma as headteachers try to develop their leadership by reinforcing their own values and those they share in a community whilst constantly having to react to external changes. Balancing these two, often competing, set of agendas is the basis of this dilemma in times of massive and continuing externally generated change.

This dilemma reflects the position of many of the headteachers in the study as they found themselves caught between two sets of imperatives for changes – internal and external. The external impetus for change was the 'imposed' changes, (e.g. DfEE, OFSTED or LEA).

"Changes are externally imposed so that the head must interpret incoming documents before she can inform the staff. The speed with which those changes have had to be introduced means that she has had little time to motivate staff and she is finding it increasingly difficult to justify imposing yet more demands for change. (S1)

The internal imperatives on the other hand were a complex mixture of school based factors (e.g. the 'given' needs of a particular school, which would exist irrespective of the type of leadership approach adopted – the level of staff competence and motivation, the culture of the school and the current level of pupil achievement) and the leadership approaches of the headteachers as they tried to establish a particular vision, values framework or school ethos.

"Leadership is about getting across to the staff where we are now and where we are going so that they can see what the heads wants." (S2)

The management of externally imposed change creates tensions concerning how best to introduce change within a school. If in trying to tailor an imposed change to fit a school the headteacher over prescribes what is to happen they can be accused of presenting staff with a fait accompli or rail roading them. On the other hand if they under prepare staff for change they can be seen as being too reactive rushing things through too quickly.

"She's a good leader but she's a better manager, because she's doing things yesterday. She does things yesterday and we have to, or I have to, get her to do them tomorrow. She is extremely quick and she expects everybody else's brain to be as quick as her. To me a leader will be quick but they will allow everybody else, give everybody time, to get on the ship. She wants you on the ship and around the world before you've got your passport sorted...She can't understand why everyone else isn't as independent as her. She will have fifteen things going on at the same time and she will have her finger on every single one of them. I couldn't do that. I am a bit more methodical." (S9)

The challenge of adapting and customising external imperatives to the needs of a school becomes a leadership dilemma when they can no longer justify such changes in terms of the needs of their school,

"I don't mind taking decisions as long as they are sensible ones. I dislike taking decisions that are imposed from outside and that are not useful to the school." (S12)

"There is nothing more important than the pupils in the school, no budget, not OFSTED, nothing. They are what we are here for and their well being and success is of paramount importance." (S12)

The clash between externally imposed changes and internal needs or the values of staff moves from being a management issue and becomes a dilemma when it presents headteachers with the choice of having to adopt the role of either a 'sub-contractor', or 'mediator'. As a sub-contractor they become one more link in a chain leading down from those who have developed a policy through its various stages of implementation until it impacts on teachers and pupils. The limit that this role places on their autonomy and decision making, combined with the visibility and public nature of their loss of control, undermines their moral authority as leaders as they seek to justify the unjustifiable. The role of the mediator on the other hand, may offer them the space in which to integrate the externally imposed change.

"At the end of the day the head has to have integrity and has to stick to core values and beliefs. It is important that the head can demonstrate integrity in the face of adversity and can show a moral purpose against all odds." (S11)

Post-Transformational Leadership: towards a values-led contingency model

The most important findings from this research on effective leaders are: i) that they surrounded by a matrix of expectations and demands; ii) within this they are constantly and consistently managing several simultaneously competing set of tensions; and iii) they have to make the right 'tough decisions' about the resulting leadership dilemmas. We termed the skills and attributes necessary to do this as the exercising of values-based contingency leadership.

in short, the headteachers led both the cognitive and the affective lives of the school, combining structural (developing clear goals), political (building alliances) and educational leadership (professional development and teaching improvement) with symbolic leadership (presence, inspiration) and human leadership (demonstrating care

and support). They were both transactional – ensuring that systems were maintained and developed, targets were formulated and met and that their schools ran smoothly – and transformative – building on esteem, competence, autonomy and achievement, raising, 'the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and the led' (Sergiovanni, 1990); and bonding, 'by inspiring extraordinary commitment and performance ... (helping) ... people move from being subordinates to being followers' (Sergiovanni, 1990, pp. 25) with vision, values and standards. In these schools, a new kind of hierarchy emerges:

'one that places purposes, values and commitments at the apex and teachers, principals, parents and students below in service to these purposes ...'
(Sergiovanni, 1990, pp. 27)

It seems that morality, emotion and social bonds provide far more powerful stimulants to motivation and commitment than the extrinsic concerns of transactional leadership in which leaders and followers exchange needs and services to achieve independent objectives.

'Leadership in general must maintain an ethical focus which is oriented towards democratic values within a community. This has to do with the meaning of ethics historically – as a search for the good life of a community ... Ethics here refers to a more comprehensive construct than just individual behaviour; rather it implicates us and how we as a moral community live our communal lives.'
(Grace, 1995, pp. 55)

In research on school leaders in Denmark, Scotland, England and Australia, John MacBeath and his colleagues asked teachers to choose from five definitions of leadership which were closest to and furthest away from their views of an effective leader. The teachers in our study provided examples of all five, reinforcing our developing notion of core characteristics of effective leaders:

'1. Leadership means having a clear personal vision of what you want to achieve.

2. Good leaders are in the thick of things, working alongside their colleagues
3. Leadership means respecting teachers' autonomy, protecting them from extraneous demands.
4. Good leaders look ahead, anticipate change and prepare people for it so that it doesn't surprise or disempower them.
5. Good leaders are pragmatic. They are able to grasp the realities of the political and economic context and they are able to negotiate and compromise' (Moos, Mahony and Reeves, in MacBeath, 1998 p.63)

Our data confirms these findings and suggests the addition of a sixth definition:

6. Good leaders are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school.

'...developing the necessary self-confidence to withstand the stresses and strains encountered when external and internal priorities conflict is essential for the well-being of a modern principal. Refining, understanding and confirming the educational values that lie at the heart of consistent decision-making are important components of principals' professional learning. A set of professional values is necessary if principals are to mediate productive settlements in contradictory situations...' (Dempster and Logan, in MacBeath (1998) ibid, p.96)

Recently, a research study has produced some interesting, complementary findings concerning effective leadership in businesses (Patterson, 1997). The ten year study gathered data from over a hundred small and medium sized manufacturing enterprises in the UK ranging in size from 60-1000 employees, averaging 253. Whilst it shares some of the characteristics of other recent research into the relationship over time between people management (Huselid, 1995; MacDuffie, 1995), other management practices such as the use of competitive strategies, quality focus and investment in research and development, it studied predominantly single site and single product operations.

The results showed that no other management practice had such a powerful impact upon performance – whether this was measured in terms of productivity or profitability – as people management. It concluded that:

'Managers know that people make the critical difference between success and failure. The effectiveness with which organisations manage, develop, motivate, involve and engage the willing contribution of the people who work in them is a key determinant of how well those organisations perform ...employee commitment and positive 'psychological contact' between employer and employee are fundamental to improving performance'. (Patterson, 1997)

The research claimed that i) job satisfaction explained 16% of the variation between companies in subsequent change in performance; ii) organisational commitment explained 7% of the variation. iii) organisational culture explained 29% of the variation between companies in change in productivity over a 3 to 4 year period in human relation terms; and iv) in relation to productivity, HRM practices taken together account for 18% of the variation between companies in change in productivity. The research also found that no other management practice (e.g. strategic leadership, emphasis on quality, advanced technology or investment in research and development) had anything like the same amount of influence. The researchers concluded:

'The results suggest that, if managers wish to influence the performance of their companies, the most important area they should emphasise is the management of people' (opcit p.xi).

Any analysis of the qualities of effective people leadership needs also to take account of the role of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). The lack of an 'emotional quotient' has been used, for example, to explain why some otherwise highly skilled, intelligent people fail in leadership roles, while others who are less intellectual succeed. A recent study from Henley Management College (Higgs and Dulewicz, 1999) identified seven core elements common to more than 300 successful managers:

- An awareness of their own emotions; an ability to recognise and acknowledge them without being swamped; driven by a degree of self belief;
- Emotional resilience - the ability to perform consistently through a range of different situations under pressure and to adapt behaviour appropriately; and to retain focus in the face of personal criticism;
- Motivation and drive – to achieve results, make an impact and balance short and long term goals;
- Interpersonal sensitivity – awareness of other people's emotional perceptions and needs and ability to take these into account when making decisions;
- Influencing and persuading skills;
- Decisiveness – the ability to arrive at clear decisions and drive them through when presented with incomplete or ambiguous information, using both logic and emotion;
- Conscientious and integrity – the ability to display clear commitment to a course of action in the face of challenge, and to match words and deeds.

In relation to tensions and dilemmas it is worth examining the 'competing values' theoretical framework which Patterson and his colleagues used to guide their work, for much may be applied to current and future educational contexts:

- **Human relations model** in which *'the primary emphasis is on norms and values associated with belonging, trust and participation. Motivational factors are attachment, cohesiveness and group membership. Cultural dimensions linked to this are: concern for employee welfare –the extent to which employees feel valued and trusted; autonomy – designing jobs in ways which give employees wide scope to enact work; emphasis on training – a concern with developing employee skills; and supervisory support.'*
- **Open systems model** in which the primary emphasis is on change and innovation, *'where norms and values are associated with growth, resource acquisition and adaptation. Motivational factors are growth, variety, and stimulation. Cultural dimensions which reflect this orientation are: outward forms – where the organisation is attuned to the external environment; flexibility; innovation and*

reviewing objectives – a concern with reviewing and reflecting upon progress in order to improve'

- **Rational goal model** in which the primary emphasis is *'on the pursuit and attainment of well-defined objectives, where norms and values are associated with productivity, performance, goal fulfilment and achievement. Motivations are competition and successful achievement of predetermined ends. Cultural dimensions which reflect this model are: vision – a concern with clearly defining where the organisation is heading; emphasis on quality: pressure to produce – where employees feel pressured to meet targets and deadlines; and performance feedback – where clear feedback is available for employees about their job performance'*
- **Internal process model** in which the emphasis is on, *'stability, internal organisation and adherence to rules,, where norms and values are associated with efficiency, co-ordination and uniformity. Motivating factors are needs for security, order and rules and regulations. Scales which reflect this model are: formalisation – a concern with formal (often written) rules and procedures; efficiency; and tradition – a concern with maintaining existing policies, practices and procedures' (op cit, p 9)*

Patterson and his colleagues identified the following ranking in terms of effective leadership practice: human relations, internal process, rational goal and open systems. This order would accord exactly with the relative emphasis provided by all the stakeholders' perceptions of their headteachers. Effective heads, it seems, manage a balance of high levels of concern with the welfare and support of staff with internal stability as the twin pillars upon which the pursuit of learning and achievement in the context of change and innovation are founded, in the knowledge that:

'It is employees within companies who bring about changes in productivity and how they are managed in terms of concern for employee welfare, emphasis on supervisory support, social support, etc, is likely to be critical' (Patterson et al, 1997, p.12).

Conclusion

The heads in this study, then, operated on the basis of both internally and externally determined measures of quality control so that their quality assurance criteria had a broader agenda in keeping with an holistic broader moral vision of a good school and good teachers. It was, therefore, 'more organic, involving everyone in the organisation seeking systematically, with evidence, to ensure that standards are constantly improving' (Ormston and Shaw, 1993). It was contingent but within a framework of unshakeable core values. All the heads:

- *Were clear in their vision for the school and communicated it to all its constituents;*
- *Focused upon care and achievement simultaneously;*
- *Created, maintained and constantly monitored relationships recognising them as key to the cultures of learning;*
- *Used a variety of problem-solving approaches;*
- *Sought, synthesised, and evaluated internal and external data, applying these to the school within their values framework;*
- *Persisted with apparently intractable issues in their drive for higher standards;*
- *Were prepared to take risks in order to achieve these;*
- *Were not afraid to ask difficult questions of themselves and others;*
- *Were entrepreneurial;*
- *Were 'networkers' inside and outside the school;*
- *Were not afraid to acknowledge failure but did not give up and learnt from it;*
- *Were aware of a range of sources to help solve problems;*
- *Managed ongoing tensions and dilemmas through principled, values-based contingency leadership.*

In their schools people were: trusted to work as autonomous, accountable professionals; there was a strong emphasis upon teamwork and the achievement of agreed standards and participation in decision-making (though they reserved the right to be autocratic); goals were clear and agreed; communications were good; and everyone – students, staff,

teachers and parents – had high expectations of themselves and others. In this sense their schools were 'learning organisations':

'While traditional organisations require management systems that control peoples' behaviour, learning organisations invest in improving the quality of thinking, the capacity for reflection and team learning, and the ability to develop shared visions and shared understandings of complex issues.'
(Senge, 1990, pp. 287)

The findings do not match those of recent research in English Primary schools which suggested that:

'.....school leadership is neither critical, nor emancipatory, nor facilitative ... It is the policy makers' reforms which are most strongly influencing the nature of hardship. Their assumptions hold in place a set of beliefs about organisational leadership ... (which is) ... wholly instrumental, positivist and managerial ...'(Southworth, 1998)

Indeed the leadership approaches of heads in this study did not neatly adhere to existing leadership theories, or models. The complexity of the role they faced meant that no one theory could explain existing practice but that the leadership practices adopted reflected diverse and often competing theoretical perspectives. The power of context largely dictated the leadership approach heads in the study adopted and for many heads this was highly contingent upon the nature of the problem, or issue facing them. In addition, the tensions and dilemmas they faced were unlikely to be resolved through the application of existing leadership theories. Current leadership practices need to be seen from an inter-actionist stance (Ball, 1987) and most leadership theory does not reflect, or easily accommodate this position. Our findings resonate with but do not match Sergiovanni's (1998) most recent conceptualisation of 'pedagogical' leadership which is concerned with adding value by developing various forms of human capital nor Stoll and Fink's (1996) 'invitational' leadership which emphasises optimism, respect, trust and active care and encouragement It is our view that the failure of existing leadership theory to capture,

explain and represent current leadership practice lies in a reluctance to acknowledge that leadership is a complex, messy and at times, wholly non-rational activity that is value laden and value driven.

It is clear that the heads in this study continue to operate in principled ways in situations in which successive governments have sought to impose policies which largely require a scientific/rational-economic approach to management upon schools which operate within a tradition of human relations and social systems models. The headteachers' role in managing the tensions between these competing values successfully was crucial to their effectiveness. In order to meet the statutory requirements of their job, they had to be good administrators, manage their time efficiently, and remain in touch with impending educational developments at the national level. Because of the sheer volume of their tasks, they had all actively enlisted the help of others. They were good communicators, and got on well with others in the school community. They had clear standards. They paid particular attention to staff recruitment, induction, appraisal, and development. Most importantly, they were able to reconcile the school's locally informed agenda for learning and achievement with that of the government with integrity.

Whilst there were undoubtedly tensions, this research suggests that it is the powerful role played by values which is a key determinant of effective school leadership. The heads in this study were effective because they held and communicated clearly visions and values. They empowered staff by developing climates of collaboration, by applying high standards to themselves and others, by seeking the support of various influential groups within the school community and by keeping 'ahead of the game' through ensuring that they had a national strategic view of what is and what is to come. They managed tensions between dependency and autonomy, between caution and courage, between maintenance and development; and their focus was always upon the betterment of the young people and staff who worked in their schools. They remained also, against all the odds, enthusiastic and committed to learning.

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